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Graham, Dougal

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of Simple John**

Edinburgh

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THE
Comical History
OF
SIMPLE JOHN
AND HIS
TWELVE MISFORTUNES,

Which happened all in twelvedays after
ter the unhappy day of his marriage.



EDINBURGH:
Printed for the Booksellers.

Chap. 1st

THE
COMICAL HISTORY
OF

Simple John

AND HIS
TWELVE MISFORTUNES.

SIMPLE JOHN was a widow's son, and a coarse country weaver to his trade : He made nothing but such as canvas for caff-beds, corn and coal sacks, drugget and harn was the finest webs he could lay his fingers to : he was a great lump or a lang lean lad aboon sax feet afore he was eighteen year auld, and as he said himsel', he grew sae fast, and was in sic a hurry to be high, that he did not stay to bring a' his judgement with him, but yet he hoped it would follow him, and he would meet wi't, as mony a ane does

after they're married. He had but ae sister, and she had as little sense as himself, she was married on Sleeky Willie the wile weaver, his mother was a rattling battle-scall'd-wife, and they lived a' in ae house and every body held them as a family of fools. When John came to man's state, to the age of twenty one years, he told his mither, he would hae a wife of some sort, either young or auld, widow or lass, if they had but head and hips, tongue and tail, he should tak them, and weel I wat mither, quoth he, they'll get a lumping penny-worth o' me, tak me wha will.

His mither tells him o' the black butcher on Ti'ot side, who had three daughters, and every ane o' them had something, there was Kate, Ann, and Girzy, had hundred merks the piece, Kate and Ann had baith bastards, Girzy the eldest had a humph-back, a high-breast, baker-legged, a short wry neck, thrawn mouth, and goggle-ey'd, a perfect Aesop of the female kind with as many crooked conditions within as without, a very lump of loun-like ill-nature, row'd a' thegither, as if she had

been nine months in a buggin, a second edition, of crook-backed Richard an old English King, that was born with teeth to bite a' around about him, and yet the wight gade mad to be married.

John's mither told him the road where to go, and what to say, and accordingly he sets out wi' his Sunday's coat on, and a' his braws, and a pair o' new pillonian breeks o' his mithers making. In he comes, and tell'd his errand before he would sit down says good day to you goodman, what are ye a' doing here; I am wanting a wife, an ye're a flesher, and has a gude sorting aside you, my mither says ye can sair me or ony body like me, what say ye til't, goodman? How mony doughters hae ye? Are they a' married yet? I fain wad tak a look o' some o' them gin ye like.

A wow, said the goodwife, come in by, honest lad, and rest ye, an ye be a wooer sit down and gie's a snuff.—A deed goodwife, I hae nae mills but my mithers and it's at hame.—whare win ye I'se no ken ye? I wat, quoth

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he, my name's Jock Sandyman, they
ca' me Simple John the sack-weaver,
I hae nae tocher but my loom, a pirn-
wheel, a kettle-pat, a brass pan, twa
pigs, four cogs, and a candle stick, a
good cock, a cat, twa errocks new be-
gun to lay; my sister Sara is married
on Sleeky Willie the wilié weaver, and
I maun hae a hagwife or my mither
die, for truly she's very frail, and ony
hail o' health she has is about dinner-
time; what say ye til't goodman?
can ye buckle me or not?

Goodman.) A dear John, ye're in an
unco haste, ye wadna hae your wife
hame wi' ye? they're a' three before
ye, which o' them will ye tak?

Hout, tout, says John, ony o' them
will sair me, but my mither says there's
twa o' them has fauts. And what is
their fauts? said the goodwife. Hout
said John, it's no meikle faut, but I
dinna like it, they got men or they
were married. And what shall I do
wi' them? said the goodman.

John. A deed goodman, as ye're ay
dealing among dead beasts and living
beasts, I wad put them awa amang i-

ther beasts, or gin ye be aun ony penny; let somebody tak them up o' desperate debt, I sud flie the fykes frae them, they anger'd you and shamed you baith wi' their bastards, a wheen daft jades it gets men or they be married, and bairns or they get bridals. Goodwife. A wat weel that's true lad.

Girzy. A weel John then, will ye tak me; I hae nae bastards; how will you and I do?

John. I watna gin ye be able to get a bastard, yet ye may hae some waur faut; but ye maun be my pennyworth for ye're unco little, and I'm o'er muckle, and gin ye an I were ance carded through ither, we may get bonny weans of a middlen mak. I have nae fauts to ye, but ye have a high breast, a humph back, a short neck and high shouther, the hands and legs may do, tho' your mouth be a wee to the tae side, it will lie weel to the rock, and I hae a handle of tow to spin, will be baith sarks and sacks till us, ye'll be my soney dauty up and down, a perfect beauty wi' cat's yellow een, black brows, and

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red lips, and your very nose is a purperry
colour? ye hae nae faults at all. Now
whan will ye be married?

Girzy. Ha, ha, John lad, we maun
think on that yet.

John. What the yellow lass, should
na ye be ready whan I'm ready, and
every body says, that the women's
ay ready.

Goodman. Ye'll hae to come back
and bring somebody wi' you, and we'll
gree about it, and set the day whan
ye'll be married.

John. Aweel, goodman, I'll tell my
mither o't, and come back on Monon-
day, and we'll hae a chappin o' ale, and
roasted cheese on the chance o't, but
I maun hae a word o' the bride out by
to convoy me, an a quiet speak to her-
sel about it.

Goodwife. A wow na, John, the
daft louns will laugh at you, an she'll
think shame, gang ye out by, and
she'll speak to you through the ga-
vel window.

Out goes John and the bride, and
her twa sisters goes to the window
within to hear the diversion, and what

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he would say. Now says John, Girzy my dear, my braw pretty woman, an ye be in earnest, tell me, for by my suth I'm no scorning.

Girzy. Indeed, John, I'm very willing to tak ye, but ye needna tell every body about it.

John. Then gie me a kiss on that. He shuts his head in at the window, making a lang neck to win down to her, and she stood on a little stool to win up to him. O, cries he, an ye were good flesh I could eat you! I like you sae weel, it's a pity there is sic a hard wa' atween us, I'se tell my mither sae bonny as ye're: O gie me anither kiss yet, and then I'll go. One of her sisters standing by in a dark corner gets ha'd o' a cow's head, which wanted a' the skin but about the mouth, and shuts it out towards his mouth, which he kiss'd in the dark. O cries he, but your mouth be cauld since I kiss'd ye last, and I think ye hae a beard, I saw nae that afore, or is't wi' spinning tow, that maks your mouth sae rough ateen?

Hame he comes, and tells his mither the speed and properties of the marriage

A' things was got ready, and next week Sleeky Willie the weaver and him came to greet the marriage, and stay a' night wi' the Bride, and teach John gude manners, for whan John was hungry he minded his meat mair than his gude behaviour, and he never was ta' till the dish was tume. Willie the weaver was to tramp on his fit, when he thought he had suppit aneugh; so all things being agreed, upon short and easy terms, and the wedding day set, they were to be three times cry'd on Sunday, and quietly married on Monday, neither piper nor fidler to be employed, But sweith awa hame frae the Minister, and into the bed amang the blankets, ha ha, cries John, that's the best o' ga'.

Now every thing being concludet and proposed, the supper was brought a large fat haggis, the very smell wad a done a hungry body gude, but John had only got twa three soups, until one of the butcher's meikle dogs trampt on John's fit which he took to be the weaver, and then he would sip naimair. After supper they went

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John and the weaver lay together, and then he abused the weaver for tramping sae soon which he denied ; but O, said John, there's a hantle o't left, and I saw whare it was set, they're a-sleeping, I'll go rise and tak a soup o't yet. Ay, een do sae, said Sleeky Willie, and bring a soup to me too. Away then John goes to the amry, and lays to the haggies, till his ain haggie could haud nae mair ; then brings the rest to Sleeky Willie, but instead of going to the bed where he was, goes to the bed where the bride and her twa sisters lay, they being fast asleep, speaks slowly, will ye tak it, will ye tak it? but they making no answer, he turns up the blankets to put a soup into Willie's mouth, bnt instead of doing so, he puts a great spoonful close into one of their backsides. Sleeky Willie hears all that past, comes out of bed, and sups out the remainder, and sets up the dish where it was, leaves the amry door open, to let the cats get the blame of supping the haggis, and awa they go to bed; but poor John could get nae sleep that night ; up he gets in search of the

water cann. and finding an empty pitcher, puts in his hand to find if there was any water in it, but finding none, he closed his hand when it was within the pitcher, and then could not get it out, goes to the bed, and tells Sleeky Willie what had happened him, who advised him to open the door, and go out to a knocking-stane that stood before the door, and break it there, to get out his hands, and not to make a noise in the house. So out he goes, and the bride's sister who had gotten the great spoonful of the haggis laid to her back-side, was out before him, rubbing the nastiness (as she took it to be) off the tail of her sark, and she being in a louting posture, he took her for the knocking-stane, and comes o'er her hurdies with the pitcher, till it flew in pieces about her, then off she runs with the fright, round a turf-stack, and into the house before him. John came in trembling to the bed again, wi' the fright, praying to preserve him, for sic a knocking-stane he never yet saw for it ran clean awa when he brake the pig upon't.

Now John was furnished in a house by his father-in-law; the bed, loom, heddles, treadles, thrumbs, reeds and pirn-wheel, was a' brought and set up before the marriage, which was kept a profound secret; so that John got the first night of his ain wife, and his ain house at ae time. So on the next morning after the marriage, John and his wife made up some articles, how they were to work, and keep house; John was to keep the house in meat, meal, fire, and water, Girzy was to mak the meat, and keep the house in clothes; the father-in-law to pay the rent for three years; they were to hae rae servants, until they had children; and their first child was to be a John after its ain Daddy, get it wha will, if a boy, and if a girl, Girzy after it's ain Minny, as she said, wha had wrought best for't.

MISFORTUNE I.

THEN she ordered John to rise and begin his wark, by putting on a fire, and to tak the twa new pigs and gang to the well for water. No sooner had John opened the door, and gone out with a pig in every hand, than a' the boys and girls being gathered in a croud to see him, gave a loud huzza and clapping their hands at him; poor John not knowing what it meant, thought it was fine sport, began to clap his hands too, and not minding the twa pigs, clashes the tane against the tither, till baith went to pieces; and that was a glad huzza to baith young and auld that was looking at him; Girzel the wife draws him into the house, and to him she flies with the wicked wife's weapon, her Tongue and Tangs; and made his ribs to crack, saying, "They told me ye was daft, but I'll ding the daffing out o' ye, I'll begin wi' you as I've a mind to end wi' you. Poor John sat crying and clawing his lugs

“Ha, ha,” said he, “it’s nae bairns play to be married, I find that already.” His Mither-in-law came in and made up peace, went to a cooper, and got them a big wooden stoup to carry in their water.

MISFORTUNE II.

Next morning John was sent to the flesh-market an errand to his Father-in-law, who gave him a piece of flesh to carry home, and as he was coming out of the Market, he saw six or seven of the flesher-dogs fall on and worry at a poor country colly dog; “Justice justice, cries John to the dogs, “Ye’re but a wheen unmannerly raskals, that fa’s a’ on ae poor beast, heth ye sude a’ be put in the toubouth, and ta’en to the bailies, and hang’d for the like o’ that; it’s perfect murder, “and in he ran amongst the dogs, “And be hang’d to you a’ thegither, What is the quarrel? What is the quarrel? John flings down the flesh he had carrying, and grips the colly, who took John for an

enemy too, and bites his hands till the blood followed, the whole of the tykes comes on a poor John, till down he goes in the dirt amongst their feet, and one of the dogs runs off with his flesh, so John went home both dirty and bloody and without his flesh, told Girzy how it happened, who applied her old plaister, her Tangs and Tongue, made John to curse the very Minister that married them, and wished he might never do a better turn.

MISFORTUNE III.

Next morning, John was sent to the well with the great stoup to bring in water for breakfast, and as he was pulling the stoup out of the well, in he tumbles and his head down, the well being narrow, he could not win out: some people passing by chance, heard the slunge crier, and ran to his relief, haul'd him out half dead, and helped him into the house; and after gettin a dry sark, he was comforted with the old plaister, her Tongue and the hard Tangs.

MISFORTUNE IV.

Next day, she says, John, "I must go to the market myself, for if you go you'll fight wi' the dogs, and let them rin awa wi' ony thing you buy; see that ye put on the pat; hae't boiling again I come hame." John promised weel, but performs very badly. She's no sooner gone, than he puts on the new pat, without any water in it, and a good fire to make it boil, and away he goes to the unhappy well, fills his stoup and sets it down to look at a parcel of boys playing at cat and dog they persuaded John to tak a game wi' them, on he plays till ane o' the boys cries, Hey John yonders your Girzy coming. John runs into the house wi' the water, and the pat being red hot on the fire, he tumes in the cauld water into it, which made the pat flee all in pieces, just as she was entering the door. John runs for it, and she runs after him, crying, catch the thief some person stopped him; she comes

up, and then she laboured him all the way home, and he crying, "O sirs, ye see what it is to be married! The Mither-in-law had to mak up peace again, and he promised good behaviour in time to come."

MISFORTUNE V.

On the next morning she sent him to the water to wash some oow's puddings, and turn them on a spindle, shewing him how he was to do or he went away. John goes to the water very willingly, and as he turned and washed them, he laid them down behind him, where one of his Father-in-law's big dog stood, and ate them up as fast as he laid them down, till all was gone but the very last ane, which he carried home in his hand, crying like a child, and underwent a severe tost of the old plaister before any mercy was shewn

MISFORTUNE VI.

His Father-in-law, next day, sent him

away to bring home a fat calf he had bought in the country; and tied up the money in a napkin, which he carried in his hand, for fear he should lose it. Being very weighty as it was all in halfpence, and as he was going alongst a bridge, he meets a man running after a horse; John meets him on the top of the bridge, and when he would not be stopped for him, he knocks the horse on the face with the napkin and the money, so the napkin rave, and most of the halfpence flew over the bridge in the water, which made poor John go home crying very bitterly for his loss, and dread of the old plaister, which he got very sickerly.

MISFORTUNE VII.

On the next morning, she sent him again to the bridge, to see if he could find any of it in the water, and there he found some ducks swimming and ducking down with their heads below the water, as he thought, gathering up his money, he kills one of them, and rips

her up, but found none of it in her guts or gabbie; then says he, they have been but looking for it, I'll go do as they did; strips off his clothes and leaves them on the bridge, goes in a ducking, in which time, a rag-man came past, and took away all his clothes. So he went home naked to get a bath of the old plaister.

MISFORTUNE VIII.

The next morning she sent him to a farm-house, for a pig-ful of butter-milk and as he ~~was~~ returning through the fields, the farmer's bull and another bull was fighting: the farmer's bull being like to lose, John runs in behind him, and sets his head to the bull's tail, on purpose to help him to push against the other; but the poor bull thought John was some other bull attacking him behind, fled aside, and the other bull came full drive upon John, pushed him down broke the pig, and spilt the milk. So John went home to get his auld plaister which began to be an usual diet to him, and so he regarded it the less.

MISFORTUNE IX.

His mither-in-law with several auld witty wives, held a private council on John's conduct and bad luck, and concluded he was bewitched. John was of the same opinion, and went to the Minister, and told him he was the cause of a' his misfortunes, ca'd him a wailock to his face, and said, ne had put such a black bargain in his hand, that he was ruined for ever, insisted either to unmarry them again, or send death and the bellman to take her awa, for she has a lump of mischief on her back and anither on her breast, and the rest o' her body is a clean deil. The Minister began to exhort him to peace and patience, telling him that marriages were made in heaven: "ye're a baist liar, says John, for I was married in your ain kitchen, an a' the blackguards in the town was there, an it had been heaven they wadna win in, ye tell't me that matrimony was sic a happy state, but had ye gotten as mony weel

wael-pay'd skins as I ha'e gotten ye wad
 a kend what it is ; ill chance on you sir,
 and out he goes cursing like a madman,
 throwing stanes and breaking the Min-
 ister's windows, for which he was catcht
 and put twa hours in the stocks, and at
 last his lump of corruption came and
 rubbed his lugs, threw his nose, got
 him out, and drove him home before
 her, took a resolution never to set
 him about any business in time com-
 ing but keep him on his loom.

MISFORTUNE X.

Now she gave him no sleep a' that
 night for scolding. John gat up in
 the morning lang or day and left his
 tormentor in bed, fell asleep upon his
 loom with the candle in his hand, and
 so set the web, heddles, reed and trea-
 dle-cords in a fire, by chance his old
 Viper looked out of the bed, or the
 whole house had been gone. Up she
 got, and with her cries alarmed the
 neighbourhood who came to her relief,

BLEED THROUGH

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but poor John underwent a dreadful swabbing for this.

MISFORTUNE XI.

After the former hurry and beating being over, his work being stopt, he went to bed and slept a' that day, and following night. On the next day, having nothing to do, she sent him in search of a her's nest, which had ta'en some by-place to lay her eggs in : so as poor John was in an auld kill searching a' about the walls, the kill ribs brake and down he goes with a vengeance into the logie, cutted and bruised himself in a terrible manner; up he could not win, but had to creep out at the logie below, scarce able to get hame, his face and nose a' running o' blood. In this condition, she pitied and lamented for him very much, tied his sores and laid him in bed; then sat down very kindly, saying, "My dear, and my lamb, do ye think there is any o' your banes broken? and what part o' you is sairest : and what will I get

to do good?" "Oh!" said he, "Girzy, I'm a' brizzled atween the feet," "Are ye indeed," quoth she, "then I wish ye had broken your neck, that I might a' gotten anither, useless ae way, and useless mae ways, upo' my word, ye's no be here, gang whare ye like."

MISFORTUNE XII.

Now as poor John was turned out o' doors next morning, to go awa' hirp-ling on a staff, one came and told him his mother had died last night. Oh hoch! said John, and is my mither clean dead! O an she wad but look down through the lift, and see how I'm guid-ed this morning, I'm sure she wad send death for me too, I'm out o' a mither and out o' a wife, out o' my health and strength, and a' my warklooms." His Mother-in-law came and pleaded for him; "Haud your tongue, Mither," said Girzy, if ye ken'd what ail'd him, ye wadna speak about him, he's useless no worth the keeping in a house, but to ca' him to die like an auld beast at a

dykeside. Hout tout, co' the auld wife, we'll mak o' him and he'll mend again. So John got peace made up after a', and he was easier mended than the burnt web; got all his tradles and warklooms set in order, the wife's tougue excepted' which was made of wormwood, and the rest of her body of sea water, which is always in a continual tempest.

So John appeals to a Jedburgh Jury if it be not easier to deal wi' fools than headstrong fashious fouks; owns he has but an empty skull, but his wicked wife wants wit to pour judgement into it, never tells him o' danger till it comes upon him, for his mother said he was a biddable bairn if ony body had been to learn him wit.

FINIS.